

Top Secret 219

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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Wednesday 4 January 1978

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NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION

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25X1 National Intelligence Daily Cable for Wednesday, 4 January 1978.

The NID Cable is for the purpose of informing senior US officials.

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ISRAEL-EGYPT: Sinai Exercise

[redacted] Israeli ground forces are carrying out a large-scale exercise in the Sinai, possibly one of their largest field maneuvers in two years. Israel apparently informed Egypt and the UN peacekeeping force of the exercise in advance to allay their concern over Israeli intentions.

//The two Israeli armored divisions stationed in the western Sinai as well as various combat support and service units are involved in the exercise.//

The main portion of the exercise began on Monday and probably will conclude tomorrow. //Preliminary phases may have begun about a week ago, and parts of the exercise may extend into this weekend.//

CHINA: Grain Harvest and Imports

The Chinese have admitted that 1977 was a second consecutive year of little or no growth in grain production with their claim that "despite natural adversities, grain production reached last year's level." Grain output (including soybeans) in 1976 was unofficially set at 285 million tons;

in 1975 the total was 284 million tons. China is likely to import about the same quantity of grain this year as in 1977--about 7 million tons--to compensate for the disappointing harvest.

25X1 [] Bad weather was the fundamental cause for the leveling off of grain production in China over the last two years. A drought, which ran from October 1976 to last April, was the major problem affecting production in 1977. The drought mostly affected north China, and an estimated 10 percent--about 4 million to 5 million tons--of the winter wheat crop was lost. An abnormal degree of waterlogging and cool temperatures after the drought had broken caused additional crop losses in the summer and fall.

25X1 [] The fall harvest of 1977 was nonetheless much improved over 1976, when the pattern differed. After a good winter wheat crop, early crops in 1976 were retarded by cool, damp weather that in turn delayed planting of the fall-harvested crops. An early winter and excess precipitation then caused harvest losses; late rice was especially hard hit.

25X1 [] Until late 1976, China had drawn down grain reserves to avoid spending scarce foreign exchange for new grain purchases. Purchases of wheat subsequently accelerated as Peking began to realize the extent of damage to the fall harvest from cold and damage to the spring harvest from drought. Between November 1976 and June 1977, the Chinese purchased 11.7 million tons of wheat for delivery through July 1978.

25X1 [] The total amount of grain imported in 1977 was about 7 million tons, compared with the yearly average since 1970 of 5 million tons. During the first half of 1978, 4.5 million tons of grain are scheduled to be delivered. Grain imports in 1978 will again be about 7 million tons if the half-year average of 2.5 million tons is purchased for delivery during the second half of 1978.

25X1 [] We doubt that more grain will be purchased for delivery during the first half of 1978. The Chinese need time to evaluate prospects for the spring harvest, and the amount of grain already coming in is well above the average. Wheat imports mostly supplement the grain supply of China's northern cities. []

USSR: Standards for Radiation

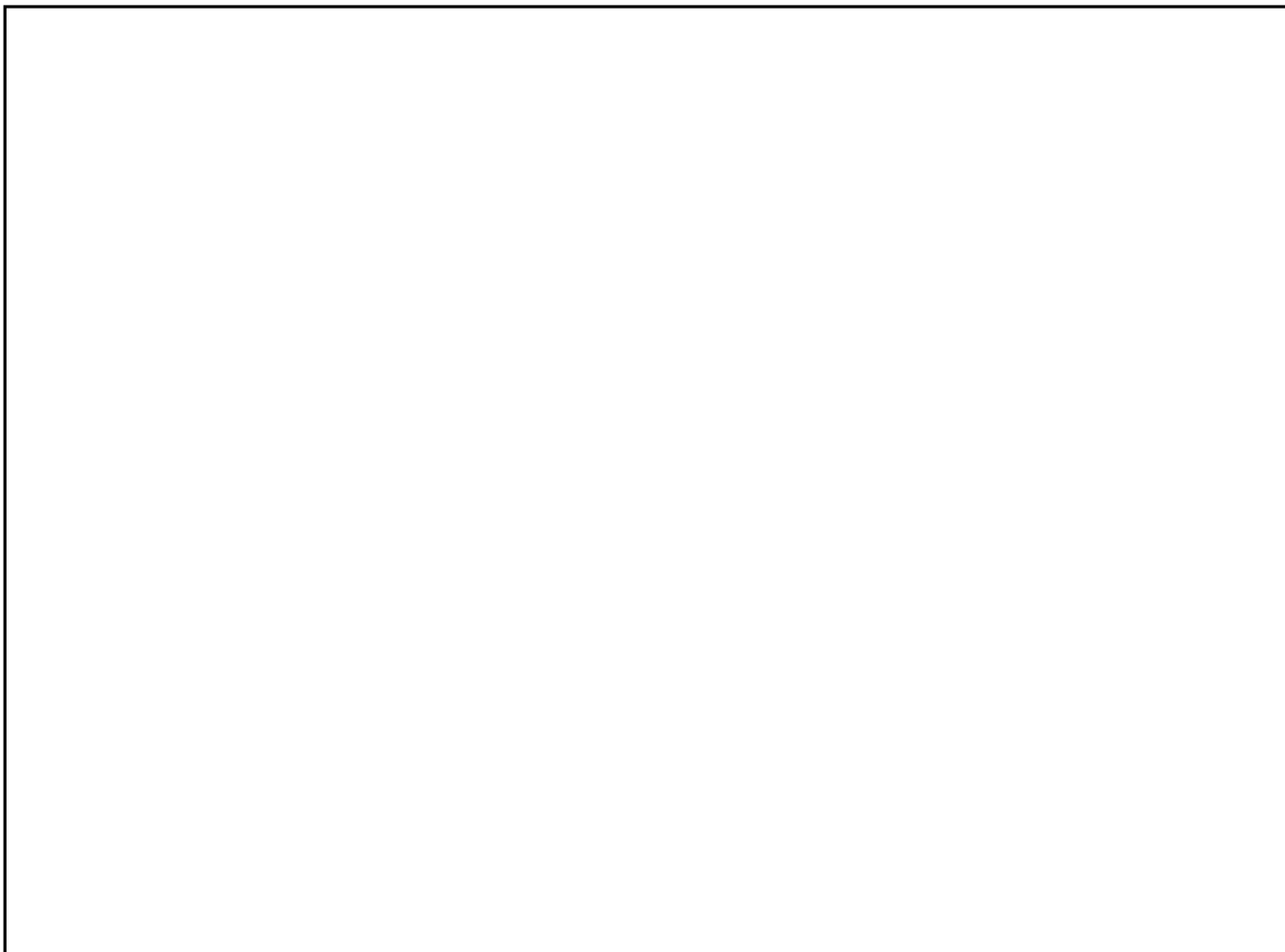
25X1 [] *The controversy within the Soviet scientific community over safety standards for nonionizing electromagnetic radiation appears to be growing more intense. On several recent occasions, with US scientists present, Soviet scientists have had heated exchanges about the establishment of risk versus benefit criteria, the values of an experimental approach, interpretation of experimental data, and the usefulness of clinical and epidemiological studies.*

25X1 [] Scientists from the Ministry of Health, who are responsible for setting Soviet occupational and general population safety standards, insist upon maintaining standards with a large margin of safety. Scientists from the Academy of Science, led by Dr. I. G. Akoyev, believe, on the other hand, that the current standards are unrealistically stringent. These scientists have been increasingly critical of the approach and research methods of the Ministry of Health.

25X1 [] Dr. Akoyev believes that some risk may be warranted and that risk versus benefit criteria must be a major consideration. He also states that experimental results should be evaluated statistically and that reliance on epidemiological studies is not warranted. Earlier this year, Dr. Akoyev told visiting US scientists that Soviet safety standards probably would be eased. More recently, however, he said that efforts are being made to tighten the standards. The Ministry of Health, for example, is trying to make the one-microwatt-per-square-centimeter exposure standard for the general population even more stringent.

25X1 [] We believe that the experimental approach of the Ministry of Health groups has consistently reported effects at erroneously low nonionizing electromagnetic radiation levels. This, coupled with the Ministry of Health's practice of setting standards an order of magnitude below the level of any observed effect, has contributed to the overly stringent standards in the USSR. []

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TUNISIA: Recent Cabinet Changes

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[Redacted] The recent governmental changes in Tunisia reflect President Bourguiba's continued confidence in his designated successor, Prime Minister Nouira, who will now exercise greater control of the cabinet than before. The new members of the cabinet are political conservatives whose views are in close accord with those of Nouira and Bourguiba. The changes also constitute a warning to Habib Achour, head of the national labor union, that the government will henceforth deal forcefully with labor unrest.

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[Redacted] In a surprise announcement last month, Minister of Interior Belkhodja and the police chief were relieved of their

duties. Foreign Minister Chatti and several other cabinet and subcabinet officials resigned or were fired during the ensuing three days.

25X1 [] Belkhodja's dismissal was the result of his long standing disagreements with Nouira and other hard-line government ministers over whether to negotiate with striking workers or to suppress recurring labor agitation by force.

25X1 [] Only three of the newly appointed ministers and sub-cabinet officials are politically significant. Habib Bourguiba, Jr., who shares Nouira's hard-line views on labor unrest, acquired the title of special presidential adviser and is likely to serve as a counterweight to Mrs. Bourguiba, his stepmother, who has been a supporter of Belkhodja and labor leader Achour. Newly named foreign Minister Fitouri and Minister of Interior Hannablia are members of the party political bureau and the National Assembly.

25X1 [] Formation of this basically conservative cabinet should reduce chronic ministerial infighting and will almost certainly result in strong action against striking workers who resort to violence.

25X1 [] Achour recently told a US Embassy official that labor agitation would increase over the next several weeks and that he is considering the formation of a new labor-based political party. He has had second thoughts, however, about leading an early challenge to the Nouira government; railroad workers and miners accepted government offers last week that fell far short of their original demands. On several occasions in the past, the blustery labor leader has predicted an imminent confrontation with the government only to retreat in the face of unified party and government opposition. []

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GUINEA: Prisoner Amnesties

25X1 [] *Guinean President Toure seems increasingly sensitive about his country's poor human rights record and about the adverse foreign publicity Guinea has received. In an unprecedented gesture earlier this year, he offered amnesty to Guinean exiles. He freed more than 160 domestic political prisoners last year, and additional prisoner releases are likely this year--although the mercurial Toure could easily change his mind.*

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[] In his 19 years of dictatorial rule, Toure has built one of the harshest regimes in Africa, although he is now showing some signs of moderation. Last month, he released some 62 prisoners in the largest single amnesty in Guinea's history. There are now probably less than 1,000 political prisoners in the country. Guinea has also signaled its willingness to receive a human rights delegation from the International Committee of the Red Cross, and it may be considering ratifying the Geneva convention.

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[] Despite the amnesties, few Guinean exiles have returned home, in part because the regime has freed few of its domestic critics. The ministerial-rank officials who were arrested in a purge after Guinean exiles attacked Conakry in 1970 have not been included in the prisoner releases. Some ministerial-level prisoners and other senior figures arrested in 1976, however, allegedly for plotting against Toure, may be released this month.

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[] The Guinean President appears in part to be heeding the advice of some of the more moderate members of the leadership. After riots in August over the regime's unproductive "socialist" economic policies, these officials urged Toure to adopt more pragmatic policies. Toure is now tolerating a booming private market supplied with a variety of smuggled goods, and the border with neighboring Senegal has been quietly reopened to traders. Both actions have helped ease internal pressures.

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[] Toure's response to quiet diplomatic pressure from the US and from France on human rights probably also reflects this more pragmatic approach.

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[] In recent months, Guinea has been strongly interested in obtaining increased Western investment and aid to help overcome its economic problems and to spur industrial development. Toure apparently believes that Guinea's poor human rights image hurts prospects for such assistance. []

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ETHIOPIA: Asmara Airport Attack

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[] A spokesman for the Eritrean Liberation Front said yesterday that its forces had overrun the airfield near Asmara and that all flights had been halted. Another spokesman, however, said that the facility is being shelled. An Ethiopian official in London denied that the airfield had fallen.

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25X1 [] We cannot yet confirm the claim but believe the facility is probably under attack. The airfield, which lies several kilometers outside the Eritrean capital, is a vulnerable target and has been shelled by the insurgents in the past.

25X1 [] The closure of the airfield would be a serious blow to the Ethiopian Government's attempt to hold Asmara, and loss of the field would be a major breach of the garrison's defensive perimeter. The city has been heavily dependent on air-lifted supplies since insurgents closed the Asmara-Massawa road in October. The airfield also supported the Ethiopian Air Force's combat operations in Eritrea. []

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CHINA - EAST EUROPE: Rebuffed

25X1 [] *Moscow's principal East European allies have rebuffed Peking's most recent efforts to improve state-to-state relations. Throughout the fall Chinese officials approached East European representatives in Peking and abroad to express Chinese desires for strengthened relations, but Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and Bulgaria all have rejected the overtures.*

25X1 [] The Chinese are under no illusions that any of the Soviet foreign policy loyalists in Eastern Europe are going to defy Moscow as Romania, Yugoslavia, and Albania have. They may hope that some movement in this direction is possible, although the Soviets so far have been able to keep their allies in line.

25X1 [] Peking nevertheless has tried periodically to make trouble for the USSR in this manner, and appeared to have considered last fall a particularly opportune time for another round of overtures. During the past year, Chinese media paid special attention to increased dissident activity in Eastern Europe, to signs of differences over economic policies within the Soviet-dominated Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, and to increased East European dealings with the West--including preparations for President Carter's visit to Poland. Peking clearly views these trends as working against Soviet interests in maintaining control over Eastern Europe.

25X1 [] Peking may also have hoped that the slight improvement in the atmosphere of Sino-Soviet state-to-state relations would encourage some East European governments to consider a

corresponding improvement in their own relations with Peking and that this would create additional difficulties for Moscow as it moved to squelch any such notions.

25X1 [] Since the Chinese diplomatic initiative got under way, the Soviets have in fact stated publicly on several occasions that they view Peking's efforts as anti-Soviet and have warned their allies not to respond. The most recent such message appeared in *Pravda* on 13 December. Moscow has also undoubtedly repeated its warnings in private.

25X1 [] The East Europeans would see advantages in closer ties to China, particularly if there were a possibility of increased exports. They may also see some political advantage in Moscow's discomfiture about Sino - East European relations. But the East Europeans are well aware of Moscow's hypersensitivity about China and of Peking's motives in approaching them. Moscow's most loyal allies--East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Bulgaria--were probably the most concerned not to get out ahead of the Soviets. []

MEXICO: Illegal Migrations

25X1 [] Because of the Mexican recession and the 45-percent devaluation of the peso in 1976--which increased US-Mexican wage differentials--the number of illegal migrants to the US this year jumped to 1.5 million from recent annual levels of 500,000 to 800,000. We expect the flow to drop back toward the previous level by 1979. While most of the migrants return home after several months, perhaps as many as a third of them have stayed in the US each year.

25X1 [] Mexico is by far the largest source of illegal migrants to the US. Unlike illegal migrants from other countries in Latin America and the Far East, the Mexicans come mainly from small villages in rural areas. They are different in other ways:

- They are strongly attached to their local area, and most of them generally remain in the US only four to six months.
- They make repeated trips to the US.
- They have been recently employed--many are small land-owners or shopkeepers--and have the \$200 to \$300 needed for transportation, food, and smuggling fees.

--Like their fellow villagers migrating to Mexican cities, they are more likely to be seeking higher wages than fleeing unemployment.

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[] These migrants probably come mainly from eight Mexican states. In descending importance, the states are Michoacan, Zacatecas, San Luis Potosi, Guanajuato, Durango, Chihuahua, Jalisco, and Nuevo Leon.

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[] Mexico's other 23 states and the Federal District provide fewer migrants in part because:

--The southern states are far from the US border and, more important, their largely rural Indian inhabitants are culturally indisposed to migration.

--The people living in the Federal District and surrounding areas go to Mexico City to seek jobs.

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[] The northern states that are not sources of migrants are in a better position to absorb labor at relatively high wages than are the migrants' home states.

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[] Although some of the states that are sources of migration are among Mexico's richest, they all face serious problems. Agriculture is not expanding fast enough to absorb the growth of their rural labor force. Industry is generally small-scale, tends to pay low wages, and thus is not an attractive source of employment.

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[] Population and age characteristics indicate that migration pressures will increase most rapidly in Zacatecas, Michoacan, and Guanajuato. Prospects for economic growth that will create jobs are best in Nuevo Leon and Jalisco for industry and in Chihuahua for both industry and agriculture.

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[] While these eight states will continue to supply illegal migrants for many years, we expect their relative importance to decline. As Mexico becomes more urban, the number of illegal migrants from urban areas will increase.

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[] Urban migrants will be similar to those from South America and the Far East, who are relatively well-educated white

collar or skilled workers. Unlike the rural migrants, they will come to the US with every intention of staying.

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BRIEF

Argentina-Chile

//Negotiations between Argentine Foreign Minister Montes and his Chilean counterpart over disputed maritime limits in the South Atlantic ended abruptly last week; neither side was willing to make concessions. The stiff negotiating posture taken by Chilean Foreign Minister Carvajal during the talks may reflect Santiago's reluctance to appear too conciliatory on a nationalistic question prior to today's referendum.//

//Argentina and Chile continue to maintain firm pressure on each other over the conflicting claims. The dispute arose over how the decision by the International Court of Justice last May awarding three small islands in the Beagle Channel to Chile will affect Argentina's maritime rights outside the channel, a question not addressed by the court. Both countries reportedly have moved some troops and supplies to the south.//

A major clash is unlikely. Relations between the two countries remain cordial, and Argentine and Chilean officials appear inclined to continue exploring ways to resume discussions aimed at a peaceful solution.

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